

## REVISED Goals and Objectives

The following are the goals and objectives that will form the foundation for the action plan of the Action 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan. The goals and objectives were initially developed in Phase I of the process.<sup>1</sup> These were subsequently revised as a result of resident input solicited at a public workshop held on October 20, 2010.

NOTE TO THE ACTON 2020 COMMITTEE: The changes that reflect the input from the October 20 public workshop are indicated in yellow highlight (to be removed as we move forward). Thoughts regarding strategies for meeting the goals and objectives are listed under the heading “Ideas for Strategies”<sup>2</sup>. Ideas regarding strategies documented in Phase I are in regular (non-italic) font. These are followed by any additional thoughts contributed at the October 20 public workshop that are listed in *italics*.

### Preserve Town Character

**GOAL:** We feel strongly about preserving and enhancing what makes Acton special and unique, including its rural and historic characteristics and its village centers.

**Objective:** Preserve Rural and Historic Characteristics

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Define Rural and Historic Characteristics and actively preserve these
  - Meandering sidewalks
  - Protect and promote community gardens, stone walls, trees, country fairs and farmer’s markets
  - *Create more formal structures for collaborating with neighboring towns to address common issues (including 40B developments, open space protection, etc.)*
  - *Explore ways of saving barns*
  - *Improve non-car oriented connections*
- Preserve and acquire open space
  - Purchase open space
  - Use zoning to protect existing open space
  - Actively support agriculture (e.g. right to farm by-law)
  - Promote natural environments
  - Preserve and promote green spaces along roads and in front of buildings

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<sup>1</sup> In early 2008, nearly two thousand Acton residents and business owners participated in a six-month long process, which culminated in developing an Emerging Vision and Goals for the Town’s future. A concerted effort was made to reach out to a broad range of participants and to include diverse points of view in the community discussion.

<sup>2</sup> In some cases these are interpretations by the Consultant of statements made by participants. This list of “Ideas” will be the starting point for developing a complete action point. It will be reviewed and further refined by the Acton 2020 Committee, the Consultant Team, and Town Staff.

## Acton 2020 Goals and Objectives

- *Clarify which open space is not protected and to what degree protected space is indeed protected*
- *Create a proactive strategy to anticipate and react to open space, water resource protection issues and opportunities*
  - *Propose a package of by-laws (e.g. prevention of demolition, clear cutting)*
  - *Provide better incentives to preserve community assets*
  - *Plant trees to enhance Acton streets, especially in villages and Kelley's Corner.*
- **Develop Comprehensive Site and Design Review**
  - *Emphasize the importance of Design Guidelines for business and residential development to be in keeping with the goal*
  - *Ensure that sidewalks are in keeping with town character*
- **Preserve historic features**
  - *Expand historic districts to include older historic homes*
  - *Publicize and make accessible town features (historic site, nature trails, etc.)*
  - *Improve town entrances / gateways to be welcoming & reflect our historic heritage*
- **Manage growth proactively**
  - *Understand how water limits growth*
  - *Create a visual build out plan that captures goals for the entire town*
  - *Consult the 1998 Master Plan*
  - *Encourage regional cooperation*
  - *Control residential development*
  - *Improve governing structures to encourage an integrated approach to problem-solving*

### **Objective: Preserve and Enhance Village Centers**

#### **Ideas for Strategies**

##### *West Acton Village Center*

- *Develop West Acton into the Town's "center."*

##### *Other Village Centers*

- *Encourage more activity through the provision of parks and outdoor areas to congregate, and by promoting a variety of uses including grocery store, family restaurant, benches, a variety of businesses, parking in the back of buildings, places to go at night, pleasant lighting.*
- *Support walkability in the centers*
- *Program events*
- *Encourage unique and fun window-shopping*
- *Support locally owned shops; develop "buy local" campaign*
- *Identify anchor with "pulling power"*

## Acton 2020 Goals and Objectives

- Define desired character (e.g. “quaint, but not cute”). Each village should have its own distinct character.
- Slow traffic
- Plant flowers and trees
- Encourage mixed-use development
- Invite ethnic communities to contribute vitality through celebration, food, etc.
- Develop a non-profit semi-government organization to revitalize village centers
- Use West Acton and West Concord as models
- Improve Kelley’s Corner
  - Encourage wide range of shops and restaurants
  - Redevelop area with pedestrian orientation (including sidewalks, benches, signage, etc.)
  - Develop design guidelines to control “look and character”
    - *Plant trees to enhance streetscape, especially in the villages and Kelley’s Corner*

### Plan for Sustainability

**GOAL: Increase Awareness Regarding the Need to Plan for Sustainability, continue current efforts at being mindful of sustainability issues, and develop a plan to proactively address our future sustainability.**

**We value taking responsibility for our actions and planning for the future. We are mindful of our actions today because we are considerate of future generations living tomorrow.**

#### **Objective: Increase Awareness Regarding the Need to Plan for Sustainability**

##### **Ideas for Strategies**

- Define and discuss sustainability (*include issues of water, air, land use, quality of life, green house gases; define where we are and where we are going*)
- Adopt a proclamation supporting greenhouse gas reduction
- Increase awareness *and educate people on the need to be more sustainable*
  - *Provide education in schools*
  - *Promote greater public awareness town-wide*
  - *Develop massive energy conservation drives*

#### **Objective: Continue and expand current sustainability efforts**

##### **Ideas for Strategies**

- *Continue and expand Acton’s current sustainability efforts including recycling, low-level street lighting fixtures, low-fuel vehicles, protecting water resources, etc.*

#### **Objective: Develop a plan and action steps to proactively address issues of sustainability**

### Ideas for Strategies

- *Identify specific steps needed to develop plan that would help in meeting the goal of sustainability; consider the following:*
  - Explore the use of renewable energy sources
  - Involve the ethnic communities; many come from cultures that have a history of sustainability
  - Re-think how Town staff works and commutes.
  - *Review the town's high tax rate; it discourages people from staying long term*
  - *Explore ways to make the Town more financially sustainable*
  - *Relate to transportation goals*
  - *Relate to development, type, amount and location and reflect in zoning*
  - *Change rules and regulations (water, air quality, land use, green building, smart growth, mixed use development, etc.)*
    - *Water Resource Protection*
    - *Change zoning to restrict residential growth*

### **Objective: Support Land Use and Life Style Changes that promote long-term sustainability**

### Ideas for Strategies

- Provide public transportation/walking/biking facilities
- Provide incentives to home-owners and businesses to build green and save energy
- Retrofit public buildings to be energy efficient
- Eliminate idling vehicles
- Organize web-based car pooling
- Start a "Transitional Town Project" toward self-sufficiency and energy autonomy
- Turn the transfer station into a renewable energy power plant (also use yard waste)
- Use the transfer station as a model for sustainable development, including exhibiting trash as art
- *Create a central, multi-use, multi-generational community center for social sustainability (important features include location and determining feasibility of existing facilities)*
- *Encourage denser zoning close to South Acton train station*
- *Maintain the schools*
- *Winterize homes*

### **Objective: Preserve and Protect Natural Resources**

### Ideas for Strategies

- *Preserve and protect natural resources, including surface and ground water (e.g. streams, ponds, drinking water, and wetlands etc.)*
  - *Identify and define Town's water capacity*
- *Pay attention to pollution threats and environmental threats*
- *Develop a long-range planning for water, power, and agricultural resources (include food and energy sheds in plans).*

## Improve Connections

**GOAL:** We recognize that a community that is connected is safer, stronger, and provides more opportunities for meaningful interaction. We envision supporting these connections through physical means including sidewalks, bike paths, trails and public transportation to connect people and places, and to support independent and safe travel for all. We also envision open communication as a means to further connect residents (e.g. through the web, cable TV, community bulletin boards, etc.).

### Objective: Improve Walking and Biking Experience

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Improve safety
- Create connections, system of sidewalks, trails, bike paths, bike racks
- Explore North American and European models and incorporate relevant elements and become a model for a walkable and bikeable community
- *Extend sidewalks*
- *Provide additional bike paths/lanes (and increase awareness regarding sharing the road issues)*
- *Improve communication regarding paths*
  - *Keep maps current showing sidewalks and bike paths*
- *Walking and biking should be considered separately (they can potentially be in conflict)*
- *Ensure that provision of sidewalks does not conflict with protecting town character*
- *Pave woody shortcuts so bikes, wheelchairs and strollers can use them*

### Objective: Explore Ways to Improve Circulation In and Around Town

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Provide *free* town-wide shuttle
- Improve the train station
  - Provide more parking
  - Town shuttle to and from parking
  - Build train station building
  - More overhang on canopy for weather protection
  - Provide safe bike lane to station
  - Develop train station as mixed-use center with shops, etc.
- *Address traffic congestion (e.g. enforce lower speed limits, plow wider shoulders in winter, speed bumps, etc.)*
- *Add train station in West Acton*

### Objective: Improve Communication

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Keep town web site up-to-date

## Acton 2020 Goals and Objectives

- Create community bulletin board
- Use multiple languages (both staff and written materials should reflect the town's population)
- Create a centralized reference guide of existing Town resources
- Improve communication between the Schools and the Town
- Improve communication with businesses
  - Provide information for business owners
  - A more friendly approach from Town Hall
  - Acknowledge business owners for their participation in Town (donations, etc.)
- Attract more volunteers
  - Publicize and promote more
  - Use website
  - Provide information
  - Outreach, recruit
  - Provide incentives
  - Scheduling/timing
  - Provide and advertise opportunities for one time volunteering (as a trial)
- *Improve communication regarding existing resources and events (signs, website, community bulletin board in multiple languages)*
  - *Use Acton TV or Radio Station for better town-wide communication*
  - *Better town wide opt-in email communication system*
- *Create neighborhood email lists*
- *Provide better social connections for newcomers*
- *Provide options for voting at Town Meeting (on-line, offsite, etc.)*

### Provide More Opportunities for Community Gathering

**We value the small town feeling and appreciate the sense of community that results from frequent opportunities for interaction. We support providing places for casual social interaction and organized events that bring members of the community together. We believe in offering opportunities for intergenerational experiences, and for sharing of inter-cultural celebration (e.g. community/senior center, park, farmer's market, cultural venues, community garden).**

### Objective: Expand Senior / Community Center

#### Ideas for Strategies

##### Community Center

- *Make a commitment to a community center; accessibility is key*
  - *Community Center must be centrally located (Kelley's Corner?)*
  - *Consider reuse of the Kmart into a Community Center*
  - *Ensure that center is located within walking distance for kids access after school*
- *Other Considerations*
  - *Offer place for connections with various ages and interests*

## Acton 2020 Goals and Objectives

- *Expense may compete with other goals*
- *Create a virtual community center (but defeats the purpose of seeing friends and neighbors so would still need a place to meet).*
- *Create a Danny's Place for adults*

### Senior Center

- *Utilize senior center by different groups after hours (like schools)*
- *Given demographic trends, current senior center inadequate, location not ideal, should be a bigger resource for intergenerational connections*
- *Make it a community center with an emphasis on seniors*
- *Consider bring Danny's Place together with senior center*
- *Center should be central and versatile*
- *Should be multi-generational*
- *Increase use of current Senior Center*
- *Identify responsible party to lead effort (e.g. form a committee that plans programs)*
- *Need community's consensus*
- *Ensure infrastructure and interests are in place*
- *Provide non-auto ways to access*
- *Ensure careful design*
- *Foresee traffic impacts*

### Objective: Support Additional Cultural Activities

#### Ideas for Strategies

- *Encourage development of a Movie Theater (including independent art films, armchairs and food)*
- *Support Community Theater (including capacity to show film)*
- *Support creation of more music venues (including classical music)*
- *Theater (drama, concerts, dance)*
- *Increase number and variety and location of community events*
- *Make the library more youth-friendly*
- *Look for ways to make existing community gatherings more multi-cultural and inclusive, e.g. Oktoberfest could be more diverse*
- *Would be nice to have a town-wide group like the current Neighborhood Forums*

### Objective: Provide Additional Opportunities to Gather

#### Ideas for Strategies

- *Maintain Memorial Library; it is an important community gathering place*
- *Need to develop a real town center (maybe West Acton?) to reduce driving/energy use*
- *Emphasize small outdoor gathering spaces (other than NARA Park)*
- *Promote and support Acton Yard Sale or Flea Market (in Kmart parking lot)*
- *Encourage the development of a diversity of places*
- *Increase collaboration – e.g. Community Education, Recreation Department, and Town Boards should get together to offer programs*

## Acton 2020 Goals and Objectives

- *Protect open space; it provides opportunities for community gathering (enhanced by Community Center)*
- *Ensure that zoning and budget are consistent with community gathering goal*
- *Identify development opportunities (partner with private sector)*
- *Utilize existing resources (identify potential)*
- *Identify accessible location(s) for gathering places*
- *Ensure security, safety, and accessibility (walking, parking, shuttle)*
- *Zone for infill development where density is desirable so as not to gobble up our open space*
- *Ensure infrastructure and interests are in place*
- *Foresee traffic impacts*
- Increase Amount and Variety of Restaurants
  - Provide indoor/outdoor seating
  - Increase number of mid-level, family, casual, but not pizza places to eat
  - Increase availability of ethnic foods
  - Increase number of fine dining establishments
  - Address lack of sewers in key locations such as West Acton

## Support Inclusion and Diversity

**GOAL: We value a diverse population and wish to foster respect, promote interaction and actively support a wide variety of individuals to live, work, and play in our community. This includes a range of ages and socio-economic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.**

### Objective: Support All Ages

#### Ideas for Strategies

##### Seniors

- Provide housing affordable to those on a fixed income (e.g. elderly)
- Provide transportation
- Improve/expand senior center
- Provide health, fitness/wellness (classes, sidewalks, promote walking)
- Provide inter-generational opportunities for interaction and learning
- Include all seniors in outreach (e.g. including new immigrant groups)
- *Utilize seniors in the schools.*

##### Teens

- Provide more accessible activities for teenagers
- Consider creating a club (e.g. like Danny's Place) for older kids, another park, or other gathering place for teens
- Extend sidewalks and increase access to public transportation to help teens get around
- *Increase number of community events to include biking – kids learning together to bring community together*



### Objective: Support Socio-economic Diversity

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Provide housing affordable to empty nesters, Town staff, and young families (ensuring that the design of the “affordable housing” is in keeping with Town character)
- Coordinate with the school system to identify those in need and match them with volunteers and agencies willing and able to help them.
- *Consider allowing people to subdivide their homes to allow parents and family members to live more economically*
- *Support home-based businesses*
- *Improve communication between the Selectmen and the Housing Authority*
- *Increase supply of affordable housing<sup>3</sup>*
- *Identify and serve the needs of the Town’s low income residents*

### Objective: Embrace Cultural Diversity

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Provide space for celebration and cultural activities
- Support and encourage all people to participate in Town government such as the recent policy that any Acton resident can participate on Town board or committee (regardless of whether or not they are a U.S. citizen)
- Provide more English as a Second Language classes
- Provide organized welcome (contact people, welcome committee, reference guide to existing resources)
- Increase access to public transportation (often only have one car, older generation cannot drive and/or do not have driver’s license)
- Provide easily accessible contact information for various ethnic and cultural communities (including Brazilian, Chinese, Latino, Russian, and Indian communities)
- Provide recognition of holidays in the schools (and maybe allowance for time off)
- Hire multi-lingual staff and materials at Town Hall and Memorial Library
- Include Chinese languages and Portuguese as foreign language options at the schools
- *Promote Native American history as well as European history of the town.*
- *Break out information regarding the Town’s Latino populations (obtain information from the schools)*
- *Increase the dialogue between multi-cultural groups*

### Objective: Support the Disabled Community

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Apply Universal Design principles to provide physical access benefits to all

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<sup>3</sup> While Massachusetts has a statutory definition of affordable housing, participants may have defined this term in other ways.

## Acton 2020 Goals and Objectives

- Provide more transportation options
- Increase job opportunities and training
- Provide accessible public spaces
- *Provide housing for the disabled*
- *Make town buildings, activities and trails accessible to decrease isolation*
- *Explore possibility of paving trails (e.g. Morrison Farm)*
- *Pave key woodsy shortcuts so that bikes, wheelchairs and strollers can use them*

### **Additional Ideas for Strategies for supporting inclusion and diversity**

- *Increase number and variety and location of community events*

### **Preserve and Enhance Town Assets and Resources**

**GOAL:** We value our Town assets and wish to preserve and enhance them. These include our open spaces, schools, historic sites, municipal properties, commercial areas, recreational areas, and our neighborhoods, including the people who live in them. Our natural resources are also considered among our most important assets.<sup>4</sup>

### **Objective: Protect Existing and Acquire Additional Open Space**

#### **Ideas for Strategies**

- Purchase open space (use Community Preservation funds)
- Use zoning to protect existing open space
- Apply perpetual conservation easements
- Require playgrounds for kids in developments as part of approval process
- Convert open municipal property to conservation status
- Promote National Wildlife programs
- Support bio-diversity education
- Encourage cluster development
- Limit development
- Prevent clear cutting, preserve wooded areas
- Raise awareness in the public at large
- Provide tax incentives to protect open space
- *Consider the value and quality of water resources when evaluating open space*
- *Protect agricultural land*
- *Reduce growth*

### **Objective: Support Excellence in Schools**

#### **Ideas for Strategies**

- Keep the facilities well maintained and updated (they are the Town's biggest asset)
- Address divisiveness in community caused by financial burden schools place on Town resources.

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<sup>4</sup> Natural Resources are discussed under the sustainability goal.

## Acton 2020 Goals and Objectives

- Have students provide community service to the Town (e.g. years ago Acton teens helped to conduct the Town census)

### Objective: Improve Commercial Areas and Promote Economic Development

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Improve the aesthetics of shopping areas
- Provide more parking
- Increase safety, especially at entries of commercial areas
- Connect strip malls, especially along Great Road
- Encourage an increase in development of shopping and eating options
- Promote economic development to enhance the commercial tax base (in order to pay for needed services)
- Expand Acton Day
- Reduce traffic congestion
  - Make improvements to transportation – walking, shuttle, interconnect paths
- Be more business friendly
  - Improve the permitting process
  - Include business owners in events and notices
  - Be more welcoming to new businesses
  - Increase flexibility on sign allowances
- *Redevelop economic development areas*

### Objective: Maintain and Increase Recreational Opportunities

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Provide more indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities
- Provide recreational opportunities for all ages
- Create small parks in neighborhoods
- Protect NARA
- Make maintenance repairs including to the tennis courts, providing bathrooms, parking, and lighting where needed
- Expand focus beyond school sports
- Provide more recreational opportunities for teens (possibilities include swimming pool, teen center, bike trails, etc.)
- *Provide an indoor community facility*

### Objective: Support and Strengthen Neighborhoods

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Improve walkability with the provision of sidewalks
- Provide activities such as playground, neighborhood swimming pool, etc.
- Ensure safety
- Provide aesthetically pleasing features including public art, open space, parking behind stores, architecture in keeping with town character, meandering sidewalks

## Acton 2020 Goals and Objectives

- Provide benches and opportunities for outdoor eating
- Support both formal and informal communication and interaction among neighbors
  - Block parties
  - Neighborhood newsletter
  - Create neighborhood email lists, create and maintain database of residents by neighborhood
  - Promote neighborhood book groups, walking groups, etc.
  - Organize competitions between neighborhoods
  - Establish community projects
  - Promote walkability

### Objective: Preserve Historic Buildings and Landscapes

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Preserve both historic buildings and landscapes, *stone walls and roads* (see Heritage Landscape Inventory)
- Support historic celebrations
- Increase awareness of historic past
- *Conduct outreach to private historical property owners from town or preservationists to help with funding*
- *Pass archaeological by-law to preserve stone walls*

### Objective: Maintain Town Properties

#### Ideas for Strategies

- Conduct an energy audit of Town buildings and identify ways to increase energy efficiency
- Use the transfer station as a model for sustainable development
- Keep school facilities well maintained and updated
- Maintain Memorial Library; it is an important community gathering place
- Explore ways in which Town Hall can use more recent technology to provide services

### Additional Ideas for Strategies for preserving and enhancing town assets and resources

- *Revisit the 1998 Master Plan goals and objectives*
- *Identify and prioritize land uses and needs for all land in town (public and private)*
- *Support and encourage the development of non-public assets*
- *Define future obligations (measure impact of development, determine maximum capacity of town services)*